
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 20 February 2019 from 7.00pm - 10.15pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Sue Gent, Nicholas Hampshire, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams (Mayor), Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Padmini Nissanga, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Roger Truelove, Anita Walker, Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, David Clifford, Chris Lovelock, Mark Radford, Gary Rowland, Keith Trowell, Nick Vickers and Phil Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Monique Bonney, Richard Darby, Mick Galvin, June Garrad, James Hall, Ken Ingleton, Bryan Mulhern, Ben Stokes and Tony Winckless.

497 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

498 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

499 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2019 (Minute Nos. 414 - 426) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

500 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mike Henderson declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interest (DNPI) in respect of being a Trustee of Faversham Swimming Pools and Chairman of the Oare Gunpowder Works Steering Group.

Councillor Anita Walker declared a DNPI in respect of being a Trustee of Faversham Swimming Pools and the Oare Gunpowder Works Steering Group.

Councillors Derek Conway, Nick Hampshire and Ted Wilcox declared DNPIs in respect of their appointment to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

501 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor updated Members on his recent activities, which included attending the Sittingbourne Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club, the Eastchurch Christmas Lights Awards, and the Dementia Café Valentines event.

He also thanked Members for the support they had given to the family of the late Alan Marolia.

He drew attention to the Kent Environmental Certificate which was on display at the meeting.

502 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that one question had been submitted, the answer to which had been provided, can be viewed on the Council's website and is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes. The Mayor invited Simon Clark to ask a supplementary question.

Question One

Simon Clark asked the Leader if he agreed it was time for a review of the whole resident's parking scheme in Swale?

The Leader advised that various parts of the scheme had been reviewed over the years, as it was kept under review, but he would be happy to take this back to officers.

503 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised that six questions had been submitted by Members, the answers to which had been provided, can be viewed on the Council's website and are attached as Appendix 2 to these Minutes. The Mayor invited Members to ask a supplementary question.

Question One

Councillor Roger Clark advised that he did not have a supplementary question.

Question Two

Councillor Mike Henderson asked why the Leader could not agree to make a further commitment to house more Syrian refugee families, as the back-up support would be provided by Kent County Council (KCC) and not Swale Borough Council (SBC)?

The Leader advised that SBC worked in partnership with KCC and emphasised the importance of working together.

Question Three

Councillor James Hunt asked the Cabinet Member who picked up the cost of any increase in fly-tipping?

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs advised that there would be an increase in officer time, in terms of monitoring, however, the cost of clearing-up would depend on whether the land was private land or public land.

Question Four

Councillor Cameron Beart advised that he did not have a supplementary question.

Question Five

Councillor Anita Walker advised that she had handed over details of two vehicles to the Cabinet Member and asked if he could look into this?

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities advised that he would ask officers to look into this matter.

Question Six

Councillor Anita Walker asked the Cabinet Member if it was possible to allocate taxi rank spaces in the Central Car Park, Faversham and asked if it was correct that the wardens could not enforce the area at the rear of the former Woolworths store due to incorrect signage?

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities advised that he would look into the points she had raised.

504 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his Statement, which gave updates on Access to GPs in Swale; the Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid; Handyman Scheme; Sittingbourne Town Centre and the District Council Network (DCN) Conference.

Access to GPs in Swale

The Leader of The Swale Group spoke about the lack of doctors in Swale and asked the Leader if he thought that there was a connection between the amount of housing and the lack of doctors?

The Leader advised that he did not consider that this was connected, and he had been raising the issue for some time with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and at KCC's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, referring in particular to the age profile of GPs in Swale. He hoped the new medical school and Government money to train new doctors would help, but this would take time, given the time it took to train new doctors.

A Member referred to the impact of lack of GP services on nearby hospitals, and asked if the Leader could urge the Planning department to help to fund a proper car park at the Memorial Hospital in Sittingbourne?

The Leader thanked the Member for the work he had undertaken regarding this issue. He referred to the Section 106 funding, and advised that it might be possible to include obligations. He agreed it was a point that needed to be addressed.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid

The Leader of The Swale Group asked the Leader if he was aware of speculation that should the HIF bid fail that a developer had committed to pay for works to Key Street? He also asked how the HIF bid fitted in with the bid for improvements to junction 5 of the M2?

The Leader advised that he was not aware of speculation and so could not comment. There was a linkage between the two bids and he encouraged the Member to look at the agenda for the next Swale Joint Transportation Board.

The Leader of the Independent Group asked what hope there was for improvements to Brenley Corner, Faversham and Junction 6 of the M2?

The Leader advised it was not part of the current bidding round but it was possible it could be part of the next bidding round (Road Investment Strategy 2).

A Member referred to the amount of litter on the A249 and asked the Leader if attention could be given to this issue?

The Leader advised he was aware of the issue and pressure was being put on Highways England by him, the KCC Cabinet Member and the local MP.

Handyman Scheme

The Leader of The Swale Group praised the Scheme and asked if consideration could be given to providing a briefing for Members on this service, after the elections in May 2019?

The Leader advised that this suggestion would be considered by Democratic Services and the Member Development Working Group.

Sittingbourne Town Centre

The Leader of the Independent Group asked for information about the new owner of the Forum Shopping Centre 'Praxis'. The Leader advised that they owned similar sites in similar sized towns.

DCN Conference

There were no questions.

505 BUDGETS AND COUNCIL TAX FOR 2019/20

The Monitoring Officer outlined the procedure for the discussion on the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance presented the budget, beginning by saying that he wished he could present a budget when there was not austerity. He referred to the challenges faced each year and the uncertainty of government funding, and praised how management team and staff continued to find ways to look to the future, and find new ways of retaining excellent services whilst also finding savings.

He thanked his Deputy Cabinet Members, the Leader and Cabinet, Chief Executive, Strategic Management Team, and the Budget Task Force for their support, and in particular the Chief Financial Officer and Financial Services Manager.

The Cabinet Member said that the Council had enormous ambition, and the budget presented to Members made the vision for future development a reality, and the Council continued to 'punch above its weight'.

He referred to the types of services that the Council provided and the dedicated staff who day-in day-out delivered these services, referring in particular to the 'Delivering for You Campaign' which was designed to highlight the extraordinary work that the Council carried out for residents and was often 'taken for granted'.

This included:

- replacing litterbins in Sheerness and upgrading 'The Glen' and 'New Road' play areas on the Isle of Sheppey;
- the new play area in front of the swimming pool in Faversham, and working with Faversham Town Council on a number of areas such as additional cycle racks, information boards and improvements to the town pump;
- tackling anti-social behaviour in Sittingbourne by working with vulnerable communities to clean-up areas and working with residents and partner agencies;
- community salt giveaways, festive lights and environmental projects and grant schemes.

The Cabinet Member then spoke about the Government's continued austerity programme and the volatility of the world economy, and how it was important that the Council continued to handle its finances in a prudent and professional manner. The Council had a key role to play in reviving the local economy, to encourage new businesses and to support those already in the Borough. Major projects would see long-term dividends, whilst also boosting the local jobs market. The Council would continue to face rising costs at a time of reduced income, and so the Council would continue to improve its resilience by becoming more self-financing. The Cabinet Member referred to the improvements in the capital budget in 2018/19 and beyond, referring to the Sittingbourne Town Centre work and the improvements to the Sittingbourne and Sheerness Leisure Centres.

The Cabinet Member then moved on to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan, referring to how well the Council had responded to the financial

challenges. Services had been maintained and the Council's financial position had been strengthened, and a balanced budget had been set each year for the past decade, which included a revenue surplus generated from front-loaded savings. However, there would be further challenges ahead and the Council continued to keep ahead of the game. The Cabinet Member spoke about income from business rates but expressed his disappointment that in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, the Council had lost £200k as a result of the business rate pilot not proceeding, which had made it far more difficult to balance the budget.

The Cabinet Member spoke of his frustration at the funding cuts to Local Government and the impact that they had had. There was a need for the Council to be allowed to govern without interference from central government, and he cited the council tax referendum limit as an example. Council Tax was a key income stream for the Council, which provided a stable income to fund services, particularly with the ceasing of the Revenue Support Grant and the volatility of Business Rate income.

In terms of the Council Tax for the year ahead, the Cabinet Member did not wish to increase Council Tax but explained that the 2.7% increase proposed was lower than it could have been and was in-line with inflation. He was proud that Swale had the second lowest Council Tax of any Kent Council. In respect of staff pay, the Cabinet Member explained how this was agreed and that a 2% increase had been agreed and allowed for within the budget proposed. This increase was tied-in with the Member Allowance scheme. The New Homes Bonus Allocation for 2019/20 was £1,875,000.

The Cabinet Member then spoke about reserves, reiterating the financial challenges ahead and the need to maintain them to secure the Council's future in such uncertain times. It was vital for the Council to be able to use reserves to offset, on a temporary basis, any downfall in income or increased costs. It was fortunate that reserves had doubled in the last nine years and it was important to continue to be prudent and have a platform of financial strength, given the increase in financial risk to authorities. The level of reserves allowed the Council to invest in capital items, deliver services, and to maintain a strong balanced position.

The Cabinet Member drew attention to the Capital Strategy section of the report, referring to the progress being made with the Sittingbourne Town Centre, and the continuing need to be careful when borrowing money. He also referred to the regeneration programme throughout the Borough which would give returns for the benefit of the Council and its community. This included the future of Beachfields, Swale House, and its surrounding land.

In respect of housing, the Cabinet Member drew attention to the housing crisis in the country and whilst the Council wanted to address this issue, there were no easy or quick wins. The Council had transferred its housing stock many years ago and had limited capability in housing as a result. Working with Optivo was crucial in how to handle short-term homelessness, and he noted that registered providers in the Borough owned 14% of the total number of dwellings (over 8,000 dwellings). £100k had been earmarked to support the introduction of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A bid had also been made to the

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for £153k from the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

The Cabinet Member then spoke of his concern that there was no clarity from the Government on funding levels beyond March 2020, and this hampered meaningful financial planning, especially in respect of business rates retention, appeals and avoidance action.

Having spoke of his concerns, the Cabinet Member considered that there was plenty of good news in the budget in such difficult times. This included:

- Keeping Council tax at a low level throughout the recession and austerity, making savings and achieving a balanced budget;
- Increasing the annual grant to Faversham Swimming Pools by £20,000 per annum;
- Supporting a £31m investment in Sittingbourne Town Centre and £3.5m in a new multi-storey car park;
- Continuing to look after suppliers and helping cashflow, with 99.1% of invoices being paid on time.

The Cabinet Member reiterated the difficult financial circumstances and what had been achieved, and the need for the Council to continue to make progress in the years ahead and not to become complacent. He considered that 'dark stormy clouds' were on the horizon, but in the uncertain future ahead the Council needed to look after its staff and residents. The budget would give the Council a sound and solid foundation to work from in the future, and he referred to the need to make certain that investments provided a regular income to offset annual costs and contribute to the self-financing strategy, and to continue to provide excellent services. With shrewd management the Council could break through the 'dark stormy clouds' and into bright sunshine, and enter the 'golden age', the 2020s.

The Cabinet Member proposed the recommendations in the report and asked Members to approve the budget.

This was seconded by the Leader, who reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor advised that four amendments had been submitted, which would be taken separately.

Amendment No. 1

The Leader of the Independent Group proposed the following amendment to the budget:

"Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

CAB funding is at present £133,430 pa from SBC from whom it receives the vast majority of its funding as is the case in every Borough throughout the land. This has not been increased for at least 8 years despite rapidly increasing demands from some of the most needy people in Swale, especially those in poverty. The core of CAB operations depends on SBC and should be a priority responsibility.

I propose that CAB should be put back to at least the real funding position it had 8 years ago. To keep up with basic inflation over that period requires an increase of £33,000. Additionally the new requirement for pension enrolment will cost £3,500 from April 2019. Staff are at the lowest pay levels across Kent CAB offices and require a 3% pay rise to allow any chance of recruiting much needed staff. This would cost a further £3,500.

I propose therefore an increase of base budget funding of £40,000 per annum which does not provide so much as a penny piece for the greatly increased demand that CAB faces. This may allow at least some restoration of services to meet the acute demand from Swale residents. This funding should be taken from reserves which are at a level which can readily afford this modest increase”.

In proposing the above amendment, the Leader of the Independent Group clarified that if the amendment was agreed it should be applied over the next five years (to be taken from reserves).

This was seconded by the Leader of the Labour Group, who reserved his right to speak.

The Leader advised that he could not support the amendment as the Council already supported the CAB, referring to the grant provided to the CAB which had been maintained, and that they were now based at Swale House. The CAB had not approached the Council asking for more money but he was happy to discuss this with them in the future. He could not support taking money from reserves.

The Leader of The Swale Group spoke in support of the amendment, saying that the demand for the service was higher than ever, particularly at a time of austerity, and suggested alternative ways to using reserves for the proposal to be funded.

Members then debated the amendment. A Member referred to the need to support the poorest and most deprived residents and how additional funding for the CAB could help.

The Leader of the Labour Group, as seconder of the amendment, encouraged Members to support the amendment, referring to the need to help people who needed it the most.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance spoke in support of the work of the CAB but had a different view regarding their financial relationship. The Council had maintained their support for CAB whilst having to make savings elsewhere and had assisted in moving their offices to Swale House. He could not support the amendment but would be happy to meet with them to engage and understand their financial pressures, as he had not received a direct approach from them.

In accordance with SI 2014 No.165, a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:

For = Councillors Mike Baldock, Tina Booth, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Nick Hampshire, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Mini Nissanga, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan. Total = 10.

Against = Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Mike Whiting and John Wright. Total = 23.

Abstain = Councillors Bobbin, Derek Conway, Anita Walker and Ted Wilcox. Total = 4.

The Mayor advised that the amendment had been lost, and discussion moved to the next amendment.

Amendment No. 2

The Leader of the Labour Group proposed the following amendment to the budget:

"As an initial step to enhancing our public places for the benefit of local people and visitors to Swale, we propose the following one-off expenditures

1. Barton's Point Coastal Park-replacement of toilet and shower block £200K
2. Minster Leas-provision of ancillary facilities to complement installation of more beach huts £150K
3. Milton Creek Country park-provision of outdoor classroom for arts projects, education and holiday programmes £350K
4. Oare Gunpowder Works-provision of small café kiosk and rustic playground £300K

To be funded by the release of £1 million from the Business Rates Volatility fund to ensure that some of this flexible fund is used to benefit local people.

These developments will require additional officer support, so we propose the recruitment of a Grade 7 Project officer at a salary of £44.049K funded by the removal from the proposed budget of £54.280K for Spatial Planning salaries, and thus saving £10K on the base budget."

This was seconded by Councillor Harrison who reserved her right to speak.

The Leader advised that he would defer to the Cabinet Member to respond.

The Leader of The Swale Group spoke in support of the amendment, encouraging the need to encourage leisure and tourism in the Borough, and considered the amendment was better than what was already planned for the regeneration of Sittingbourne.

The Leader of the Independent Group spoke in support of the amendment, as he considered it would do something to improve the Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs considered it was easy to come up with a wish-list, but proper research into costs and viability was required. He referred to plans/services already in place at Barton's Point Coastal Park, Milton

Creek and Oare Gunpowder Works. The proposals were worthy of consideration but could not be supported at this time.

A debate then ensued on the amendment, which centred on the plans that were already in place; the need for the Spatial Planning Officer post; the Sittingbourne Town Centre regeneration and the increase in housing and leisure facilities, in particular the predicted increase in visitors and employment opportunities.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Harrison encouraged Members to support the amendment, referring to the need to give residents more than the minimum service and to improve facilities and accessibility.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance advised that whilst some projects may be worthy, they needed to be developed in a sensible way, and it would be fiscally irresponsible to take money from reserves at this time.

In accordance with SI 2014 No.165, a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:

For = Councillors Mike Baldock, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Mini Nissanga, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan. Total = 8.

Against = Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Nick Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright. Total = 27.

Abstain = Councillors Bobbin and Anita Walker. Total = 2.

The Mayor advised that the amendment had been lost, and discussion moved to the next amendment.

Amendment No. 3

The Leader of the Independent Group proposed the following amendment to the budget:

“I propose that SBC includes into the 19/20 budget expenditure of £50,000 to commence the provision of electric vehicle charging points in all three main centres of the Borough. There is a central government pot of money which will meet 75% of the cost of such work and therefore this would allow a total expenditure of £200,000 in the next financial year. Such a programme would demonstrate a significant commitment by SBC to a programme to help the environment, reduce CO2 pollution, and stimulate the expansion of electric vehicles within Swale. This should initially be expenditure for a single year the cost of which should be taken from reserves”.

This was seconded by the Leader of the Labour Group, who reserved his right to speak.

The Leader announced that the Council had been successful in its bid for a grant for a taxi charging point, and referred to proposals already in place to enhance the provision of charging points. This included points at Swale House, the Swallows Leisure Centre and the new multi-storey car park. He also advised that KCC was leading on a bid for all Kent Districts, and so he could not support the amendment as there were already plans in place for improvements.

The Leader of The Swale Group spoke in support of the amendment, and whilst the Council may be making a good start, more was needed to roll-out electric charging points across the Borough.

A debate then ensued on the amendment. The Chief Financial Officer and the Resilience and Licensing Manager were thanked for their work on the bid for the taxi charging point and reference was made to the update to the taxi policy to allow electric vehicles (subject to criteria).

The Leader of the Labour Group, as seconder of the amendment, spoke of the need for the Council to support use of electric vehicles, and encouraged members to support the amendment.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance referred to the air quality action plan, and the plans already in place that had been outlined in the debate, and advised that he could not support the amendment at this time.

In accordance with SI 2014 No.165, a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:

For = Councillors Mike Baldock, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Mini Nissanga, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan. Total = 8.

Against = Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Nick Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Anita Walker, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright. Total = 28.

Abstain = Councillor Bobbin. Total = 1.

The Mayor advised that the amendment had been lost, and discussion moved to the next amendment.

Amendment No. 4

The Leader of the Independent Group proposed the following amendment to the budget:

“I propose that the following sums be added to the capital budget for 19/20.

1. That £1M be provided for refurbishment and updating of facilities at Faversham Swimming Pools. This is sorely needed as the indoor pool and its building has

received no substantial maintenance funded by SBC since it was built over 25 years ago. It would also provide fairness when considering that a similar amount of capital has been committed to each of the Sittingbourne and Sheerness leisure centres.

2. That £4M be provided as a capital sum to be used for the provision of truly affordable rented housing in the Borough to be committed in 19/20 and with the resulting houses or flats being provided within 3 years from now. The proposal purposefully does not specify whether these should be built by recreating a Housing Revenue Account within SBC, or by working with a Housing Association, or through a Community Land Trust or by other means. Funding for this should either be taken from reserves or provided through a loan whichever the head of finance considers most appropriate”.

This was seconded by the Leader of the Labour Group, who reserved his right to speak.

The Leader and Leader of The Swale Group chose to speak later in the meeting.

A debate ensued which centred on the following themes:

Faversham Swimming Pools:

- Clarification as to whether the Council made appointments to this organisation;
- The need for a business plan to be properly discussed before any additional funding could be given;
- The amounts already given to the Faversham Pools for maintenance and refurbishment which amounted to £178k.

Affordable Rented Housing

- The need to address homelessness and the lack of affordable housing;
- The need to work with strategic partners to bring forward housing, and discussions taking place to bring forward 550 houses in 2022 (two thirds of which would be affordable housing);
- The lack of a business plan, consideration of risk etc in the proposal;
- The need for housing, but for it to be provided in the most cost effective manner;
- That discussions were taking place with three different housing developers.

General comments were made during the debate regarding the timing of the amendments and the process for setting the budget.

In seconding the amendment, the Leader of the Labour Group spoke of the need for affordable housing and to ensure developers provided their social housing requirement, and responded to comments made regarding Faversham Swimming Pools. The proposals suggested had not been raised at the Budget Scrutiny Committee because reserves had not been an item on the agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance praised the Faversham Swimming Pools and said that an additional £20k was already proposed to be

added to the annual grant. Discussion had taken place regarding further assistance and the Trust had said that there would not be any projects until 2021. In respect of the amendment for Affordable Housing, he considered that the £2m already allocated was sufficient initial investment. He could therefore not support the amendments.

In accordance with SI 2014 No.165, a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:

For = Councillors Mike Baldock, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Mini Nissanga, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan. Total = 8.

Against = Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright. Total = 26.

Abstain = Councillors Bobbin, Nick Hampshire and Anita Walker. Total = 3.

The Mayor advised that the amendment had been lost.

Debate then returned to the substantive motion.

The Leader of The Swale Group advised that he would not be supporting the budget and hoped there would be an emergency budget after the elections which would have a more positive vision.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the increase in the Council Tax, and said that this was actually a 5.6% increase when including all preceptors, and that people would be paying extra for no extra services. He considered that the budget did not address some of the serious problems in Swale such as poverty, the increase in use of foodbanks, social housing, poorer health services, and low skilled and low paid jobs, There was also an increase in rough sleepers, a lack of GPs and Swale had the seconded highest level of unemployment in Kent. He could not support the budget.

The Leader of the Independent Group advised that he could not support the budget as it lacked vision. There was nothing substantive in the budget for the poor and deprived, to improve the environment or to improve the provision of affordable housing.

Debate then ensued, which centred on the following themes:

- Pleased to see that work had started on the Skate Park;
- Tributes being paid to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance for the way in which he had managed the budget over the last ten years;
- The need for the Council to build its reserves due to uncertain times ahead;
- The Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Leader, as seconder of the original motion (who had reserved his right to speak), spoke in support of the budget. He paid credit to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance and his Deputy Cabinet Member, Councillor Ted Wilcox. He referred to the financial uncertainty and difficult times ahead, and the need for shrewd management of the budget now and in the future. He encouraged Members to support the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, as proposer of the original Motion, encouraged Members to support the budget.

In accordance with SI 2014 No.165, a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:

For = Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Nick Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Lynd Taylor, Anita Walker, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright. Total = 28.

Against = Councillors Mike Baldock, Roger Clark, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Mini Nissanga, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan. Total = 9.

Abstain = 0.

Resolved:

(1) That Members note the Chief Finance Officer's opinion on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves.

(2) That Minute Number 478/02/19 approved by the Cabinet on 6 February 2019 on the report on the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2019/20 Revenue and Capital Budgets be approved.

(3) That the resolutions contained in Appendix I of the report be approved.

(4) That in accordance with the proposals contained within SI 2014 No. 165 that a recorded vote be taken on the 2019/20 Budget and Council Tax.

506 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2019/20

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report and proposed the recommendation. This was seconded by the Chairman of the Audit Committee.

Resolved:

(1) That the Treasury Strategy 2019/20 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.

507 CORPORATE PLAN 2019 - 2022

The Leader introduced the report, referring to the consultation that had been undertaken, and thanked the Head of Policy, Comms and Customer Services for

his work on the plan. This was seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning Services.

Comments were made regarding the timing of the approval of the new Corporate Plan and that there would be a need for the plan to be reviewed following the elections in May 2019. Thanks were also given regarding the consultation process and to the Policy Development and Review Committee for its work in developing the plan.

In response to a question regarding affordable housing, the Leader advised this would be covered by the more detailed plans which would follow from the Corporate Plan.

Resolved:

(1) That the text at appendix I be adopted as the Council's Corporate Plan for the period April 2019 to March 2023.

508 COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY PREMIUM

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance outlined the report, drew attention to a numbering error and proposed the recommendation. This was seconded by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance (Councillor Ted Wilcox).

In response to questions, Members were advised that the law outlined how the Council could vary the percentage of the premium over three years. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance explained the circumstances when the premium would not be applied, as set out in the report, and confirmed that there was an appeal process.

Resolved:

(1) That the revision to the Council Tax premium for the financial years beginning on 1 April 2019, 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021 be agreed, as set out in the report.

509 PAY POLICY REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance (Councillor Ted Wilcox).

Resolved:

(1) That the proposed Pay Policy Statement be agreed for publication on the Council's website.

(2) That the information within the Pay Policy Statement be updated with actual year-end figures before final publication.

510 ELECTION OF MAYOR ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT

The Mayor advised that one nomination had been received for Mayor, namely Councillor Ken Ingleton, which had been proposed by Councillor Mike Whiting and seconded by Councillor Alan Horton.

The Mayor advised that one nomination had been received for Deputy Mayor, namely Councillor Roger Clark, which had been proposed by Councillor James Hunt and seconded by Councillor Mike Dendor.

Resolved:

(1) That the Mayor elect for the civic year 2019/20 be Councillor Ken Ingleton.

(2) That the Deputy Mayor elect for the civic year 2019/20 be Councillor Roger Clark.

511 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2019/2020

The Leader proposed and the Leader of the Labour Group seconded the timetable of meetings, as set out within the report.

Resolved:

(1) That the programme of meetings set out in Appendix I to the report be agreed.

512 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

The Council was asked to note the recommendations from the Cabinet Meeting held on 7 February 2019, as separate reports on the items had been considered earlier in the meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations in Minute Nos. 478, 479, 480 and 481 be noted.

513 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

At 10pm, Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders so that the meeting could complete its business.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel